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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the relationship between the values of adolescents and the corresponding values of their parents. The values were divided into six basic interests or evaluative attitudes; theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious. The sample consisted of 50 female Catholic high school students and their parents, thus the research findings are limited in their generalizability to such populations. The values were measured by the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey study of values test. The findings support the hypothesis that there is a negligible correlation between the value structures of adolescents and their parents in economic, aesthetic and political areas. Further, students rank significantly higher on the dimension of political, aesthetic and social values than do their parents, while parents rate higher in theoretical values. Generally the findings indicate a negligible relationship between parental and adolescent values, except in the area of religion where a moderate relationship was found. The data are interpreted as resulting from the child's expanding environment, leading to a less parent-centered environment and more independence in value judgments and the creation of value systems. (NG)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTED VALUE ORIENTATIONS OF ADOLESCENTS AND THOSE OF THEIR PARENTS

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The Problem

In today's society the adolescent is faced with great confusion in establishing a system of values for himself. He is bombarded with often times conflicting positions from parents, peers, teachers, church, society, and the cultural environment in which he finds himself. Mead (1961) has pointed out that along with the search for identity, which is one of the chief concerns of youth today, goes the difficulty of identity formation in a changing society. Educators and psychologists have witnessed the transition of youth from the apathy of the 1950's to the social and political awareness of the late 1960's and early 1970's. At that time it seemed that many of the values espoused by adult America were being rejected by its children. Values such as religion and faith in the political and economic system, which had been transmitted from parents to their offspring, were being questioned. There was a raising of youth's consciousness in the area of social responsibility. The question which arises is whether this phenomenon of the adolescent who has rejected parental values is representative of the majority of adolescents or merely the most vocal. Adelson (1969, p. 6) wrote, "Our interviews confirm a mounting impression from other studies that American adolescents are on the whole not deeply involved in ideology, nor are they prepared to do much individual thinking on value issues of any generality." It must be examined whether there exists any commonality between the values of parents and those of adolescents in today's society. With popular jargon set aside, these two entities can then be seen as the disparate sides of a spectrum or the shared ideas of a common relationship.

The problem of the study was to determine the relationship between the values of adolescents and the corresponding values of their parents. The values were divided into six basic interests or evaluative attitudes described as: theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that:

1. A negligible correlation exists between the value structure of adolescents in senior high school and that of their parents.
2. Students rank significantly higher in the dimensions of aesthetic, social, and political values than their parents.
3. Parents will rank significantly higher in the dimensions of theoretical, economic, and religious values than their children.

Definition of Terms

Values -- "Those matters in life that are significantly important to the individual. They influence and affect either directly or indirectly one's perceptions, decisions, selection, actions and goals (Leonard, 1962, p. 9)."

Theoretical -- characterized by a dominant interest in the discovery of truth and by an empirical, critical, rational, intellectual approach.

Economic -- emphasizing useful and practical values; conforming closely to the prevailing stereotype of the average American businessman.

Aesthetic -- placing the highest value on form and harmony; judging and enjoying each experience from the standpoint of its grace, symmetry, or fitness.

Social -- emphasizing the values of altruism and philanthropy.

Political -- primarily interested in personal power, influence, and renown; not necessarily limited to the field of politics.

Religious -- mystical, concerned with the unity of all experience, and seeking to comprehend the cosmos as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

The sample consisted only of girls. It can be speculated that the results might have been different had the sample been a mixture of both sexes. The sample was also limited racially. Ninety-four percent of these tested were white and only six percent were non-white. In addition, Ss were enrolled in a Catholic high school. The other major limitation was the test itself. It has been questioned whether the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values accurately measures an individual's values or merely rates his interests.

The Subjects

The subjects were 50 pairs of female senior high school students and their parents. Of the group, 46 pairs were white, 2 were black, and 2 were Latin-American. The students were enrolled in a parochial girls' school in New York City. Socially and economically, the individuals tested ranged from lower-middle to middle class.

Materials

Values were measured by the Study of Values (Allport-Vernon-Lindzey) which was based directly upon Spranger's Types of Men. The test consists of 45 items, 30 of which require the subject to make a

choice between two alternatives and 15 of which ask the subject to rank four alternatives from highest to lowest. In all, there are 120 responses, equally divided among the six values defined as theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious. The test is self-scoring.

Although the authors have stated that the scale was designed primarily for use with college students, or with adults who have had some college education, Hogan (1972) pointed out that the high school and college norms were surprisingly similar, with the only major difference found in the Aesthetic scale. He attributed this to the low aesthetic interests of high school girls ($\bar{X}$ = 38.2) when compared with college women ($\bar{X}$ = 43.9). In examining some of the difficulties with the test, the reviewer indicated that students seem annoyed occasionally by the content and format of the items, but he pointed out that such reactions might reflect increasing undergraduate ambivalence toward psychological testing in general rather than a problem specific to the Study of Values. Hogan questioned the validity of Spranger's types and believed that there was some question concerning what the test measured. Yet, in spite of a number of problems, he found the test to be viable.

Hundleby (1965) raised the problem of interpretation imposed by the ipsative scoring of the instrument. He also stated that since the scale is associated with a college level population, it imposes a severe limitation on the generalizability of findings from the test. It was suggested that the values involved might be appropriate for only a limited segment of the population.

The Study of Values was praised for its reliability by Radcliffe (1965) who countered Hogan's criticism of the ipsative character of the scores by stating that the authors recognized this and did not recommend an expression of the scores in a percentile profile.

Like Hogan, Gage (1959) found a problem with the ipsative scale. He recommended that it be supplemented by normative scales. The reviewer found a further difficulty in some confusion by the test of the two psychological dimensions of interest and value. It was pointed out that an individual can be interested in a given area while having a strong disagreement with individuals or institutions operating in that area.

Some criticisms of the instrument appear to be valid, but it was employed in the present study because it is one of the few scales available for the measurement of values and it is acknowledged as a useful research instrument.

Procedures

The instrument was administered to students during a religion class. Each student was given a second copy of the test to give to one of her parents. The Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation and the t test of correlated means were used to test the hypotheses. Significance was sought at the .05 level.

Findings

There existed no significant correlations between the values of parents and their daughters in the economic (r = .14), aesthetic (r = .03), and political (r = .18) areas. Significant, but slight, correlations were found in theoretical (r = .30) and social (r = .21)

values, and a moderate one in the area of religious values (r = .46). The results, therefore, supported the hypothesis that there is a negligible correlation between the value structures of adolescents in high school and those of their parents in the areas of economic, aesthetic, and political values. The hypothesis was not supported in the areas of theoretical, social, and religious values, where significant correlations were found.

The t tests of correlated means revealed that significant differences existed between parents and students in theoretical, aesthetic, social, and political values. These findings supported the hypothesis that students would rank significantly higher in the dimensions of aesthetic, social, and political values than their parents. The results further supported the hypothesis that parents will score significantly higher in the theoretical values. The hypothesis that parents rank significantly higher in the dimensions of economic and religious values than their children was not supported, as no significant differences were found.

For the most part, the present study supports the findings of Munns (1972), Friesen (1972), and Van Pelt (1970), whose studies also found the relationship between parental and adolescent values to be negligible.

Discussion

One can speculate on the cause of these findings. For more than a decade society has witnessed the growing independence of its youth. Parental values can no longer be considered to be the prime influence on the attitudes of children. Today's youth are exposed to a

multitude of divergent influences. As the environment of the child expands, so does the opportunity for independent choice. As the young person leaves the parent-centered environment, he begins to form a value system which he can call his own. It is interesting to note that the one area in which a moderate relationship did exist was the religious value. Also, there was no significant difference between parents' and daughters' scores. In an increasingly secular world this is surely a surprising result which may be explained in a number of ways. First, the students were enrolled in a school with a religious orientation. Also, while rejecting many of the outward signs of religion, adolescents may very well adopt the basic religious principles of their parents. It is possible, as Gage (1959) has pointed out, that the questions concerning certain areas in the Study of Values might very well have confused interest with value.

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